

Message Text

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ORIGIN SAB-01

INFO OCT-01 ARA-02 ISO-00 /004 R

66650

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APPROVED BY:S/AB:JKARINSHAK

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R 211741Z JAN 75

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 013885

FOR AMBASSADOR BUNKER

FOLLOWING REPEAT DAMASCUS 00167 DATED 1/16/75 ACTION STATE
INFO ABU DHABI ALGIERS AMMAN BEIRUT CAIRO DHAHRAN DOHA JERUSALEM
JIDDA KUWAIT LONDON MANAMA MOSCOW MUSCAT PARIS RABAT ROME SANAA
TEHRAN TEL AVIV TRIPOLI TUNIS USMISSION GENEVA

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 167

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

KUWAIT PASS DOHA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, SA

SUBJ: KING FAISAL VISITS SYRIA

1. SUMMARY: KING FAISAL'S VISIT TO SYRIA IS IN FULL
SWING AND FROM ALL INDICATIONS IS GOING WELL. CITY DECKED
IN THOUSANDS OF FLAGS, BRIGHT LIGHTS, AND SLOGAN POSTERS
EXTOLLING VIRTUES OF ARAB UNITY. SARG EMPHSIZING
TRADITIONAL VALUES AND HAS MADE CONSPICUOUS EFFORT TO
ELIMINATE ALL REFERENCES TO BAATH PARTY AND BAATHI
IDEOLOGY. COMMUNIST RESIDENT DIPLOMATIC CORPS HAS
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TURNED OUT EN MASSE INCLUDING SOVIET AMBASSADOR, DEAN

OF CORPS, WHO GREETED KING FAISAL, NO DOUBT TO HIS CHAGRIN, AT ARRIVAL CEREMONIES. COMMUNIST MINISTERS IN GOVERNMENT NOTICEABLY ABSENT FROM OFFICIAL FUNCTIONS.
END SUMMARY

2. VISIT OF KING FAISAL TO SYRIA IS IN FULL SWING. SARG DECKED CITY IN THOUSANDS OF SYRIAN AND SAUDI FLAGS AS WELL AS LIGHTS ON MAIN THOROUGHFARES AND BUILDINGS. THERE WAS THAT SAME FEVERISH ACTIVITY WE NOTICED BEFORE NIXON'S ARRIVAL TO PUT STREETS, PARKS, AND FACILITIES IN BEST CONDITION POSSIBLE. SARG EFFORTS THIS TIME EXCEEDED THOSE FOR NIXON VISIT OR THOSE FOR ANY OTHER CHIEF OF STATE WHICH WE HAVE OBSERVED IN PAST YEAR. CITY ALSO COVERED IN BANNERS WITH GREETINGS TO SAUDI MONARCH. THEMES ARE TRADITIONAL ONES EXTOLLING ARAB BROTHERHOOD AND SOLIDARITY IN FACE OF THREATS BY ISRAEL AND AGAINST ARAB OIL INSTALLATIONS. WE PARTICULARLY STRUCK BY ABSENCE OF ANY SLOGANS REMOTELY ASSOCIATED WITH BAATHI IDEOLOGY.

3. LARGE CROWD TURNED OUT FOR ARRIVAL CEREMONY, JANUARY 14, AND ALONG ROUTE OF MOTORCADE THROUGH CITY. FAISAL APPEARED WELL AND ALERT WITH NO INDICATION, AS WAS REPORTED FROM RABAT IN NOVEMBER, THAT KING NEEDED ASSISTANCE IN WALKING. ONE CURIOUS EVENT WAS DECISION BY SOVIET AMBASSADOR, WHO IS DEAN OF DIPLOMATIC CORPS, TO BE PRESENT AT AIRPORT. FAISAL MUST HAVE SWALLOWED HARD TO ACCEPT HIS GREETING AND THAT OF OTHER COMMUNIST AMBASSADORS. ALL OF THEM ALSO ATTENDED STATE BANQUET SAME EVENING. WE HAVE REPORTS THAT NO TOP BAATH PARTY NOR CPS OFFICIALS WERE INCLUDED IN AIRPORT CEREMONIES OR STATE BANQUET. ASAD UNQUESTIONABLY PLAYING DOWN PARTY ROLE IN COUNTRY ON THIS OCCASION BECAUSE OF FAISAL'S STRONG FEELING ABOUT BAATHIS.

4. KING HAS HELD TWO PRIVATE SESSIONS WITH PRESIDENT ASAD EVENINGS OF JANUARY 14 AND 15. DETAILS OF DISCUSSIONS NOT YET ANNOUNCED. KING ALSO VISITED KUNEITRA (JANUARY 15) AND UNIDENTIFIED FRONT-LINE POSITION. JANUARY 16, HE WILL BE GUEST OF SAUDI MILITARY AT NEARBY AIR BASE AND WILL HOST DINNER FOR PRESIDENT
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ASAD IN EVENING.

5. COMMENT: MOST SIGNIFICANT FACT ABOUT VISIT IS THAT IT TAKING PLACE. WHOLE GENERATION OF SYRIANS HAS GROWN UP ON DIET OF HATRED FOR REACTIONARY ARAB REGIMES WITH FAISAL'S KINGDOM HELD UP AS PRIME EXAMPLE. YET CROWDS HAVE POURED OUT TO GIVE MONARCH ROUSING AND, UNEXPECTEDLY, SPONTANEOUS WELCOME. DIRECTOR GENERAL OF SYRIAN TV DESCRIBED

IT WELL TO EMBOFF, SAYING, "FOR PAST FOUR YEARS WE HAVE
CONSCIOUSLY EASED UP ON PROPAGANDA ATTACKS AGAINST OTHER ARAB
LEADERS TO IMPROVE OUR IMAGE. FAISAL'S VISIT IS PROOF OF OUR
SUCCESS." GIVEN KING'S LONG STANDING DISTASTE FOR BAATH,
HIS VISIT MUST SIGNAL HIS BELIEF THAT CURRENT SYRIAN
REGIME SIGNIFICANTLY BETTER THAN ITS PREDECESSORS.
FINALLY, WE FIND REMARKABLE THE WILLINGNESS OF SYRIAN
GOVERNMENT OF BAATHI PERSUASION TO SO TOTALLY DOWNPLAY
BAATH PARTY AND ITS IDEOLOGY. MURPHY UNQUOTE KISSINGER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AMITY, CHIEF OF STATE VISITS, POLITICAL PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: buchandr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975STATE013885
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: S/AB:JKARINSHAK
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750023-0577
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750133/aaaabcwa.tel
Line Count: 124
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SAB
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: buchandr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19 MAY 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <30 SEP 2003 by buchandr>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: KING FAISAL VISITS SYRIA
TAGS: PFOR, SY, SA, (FAISAL)
To: PANAMA
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006